

**THE DEFORMITIES
OF THE FINGERS
AND TOES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760577087

The deformities of the fingers and toes by William Anderson

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WILLIAM ANDERSON

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OF THE FINGERS
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THE DEFORMITIES OF THE FINGERS AND TOES

BY

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LONDON

J. & A. CHURCHILL

7 GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET

1897

297848
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PREFACE

THE following pages are developed from a course of Hunterian Lectures delivered by the Author in the theatre of the Royal College of Surgeons, in 1891. The matter has been revised and brought up to date, and augmented by a section upon the congenital deformities of the hands and feet.

WILLIAM ANDERSON.

2 HARLEY STREET, W.

March 1897.

V. H. CARMICHAEL
M.D. (NEW YORK)
PHYSICIAN

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THE DEFORMITIES OF THE FINGERS AND TOES

THE section of surgical disease treated in the following pages is unambitious in its scope, but it is, nevertheless, one that deserves the attention of every surgeon and pathologist, because it comprises a group of ailments which are the source of much pain and crippling, and because it offers many problems of causation that are still unsolved. It is true that none of these affections threaten life, but in medicine, as in law, it is often the value of the principle involved rather than the magnitude of the interests immediately at stake that invests the case with importance.

There is a material advantage to be gained by studying the deformities of the hands together with those of the feet, for it will be found that nearly all the forms of contraction that appear in the one are represented in the other, and a comparison of the conditions under which the two sets of affections arise may throw light upon the pathogeny of both. At the same time, if we glance at the structural and functional differences

in the hand and foot, and at the fact that civilised life imposes artificial restraints upon the freedom of action of the one, while it cultivates to a marvellous degree of perfection the variety and precision of movement in the other, we shall understand that although certain deformities of the fingers may have a strict pathological analogy with those of the toes, the effects produced, and the treatment required may differ essentially in the two sets of cases.

It will be seen that our knowledge of some of the affections to be described is of very recent date, and that certain diseases, frequent in occurrence, obvious in character, and very inconvenient or painful in results, have only found a place in our text-books within recent years. Even the most ancient in point of literary existence scarcely dates beyond the third decade of the present century; while the youngest, when regarded in the same aspect, is merely a child of a few winters; and yet both the one and the other may be nearly as old as mankind.

SECTION I

CONTRACTIONS OF THE FINGERS

THESE may be grouped as follows: 1. Contractions due to pathological processes taking place in the cutaneous and fascial structures of the palm and palmar surface of the fingers. This includes the so-called "contraction of the palmar fascia," with which the name of the great surgeon Dupuytren is inseparably connected, as well as another affection of similar character, but different pathological origin. 2. Contractions due to developmental irregularities in the bony and ligamentous elements of the articulations. Under this heading come the deformity which may be termed "hammer finger" and the closely allied lateral distortions of the digits—affections which are chiefly of importance in their bearing upon analogous conditions of the toes. 3. Contractions arising from shortening of the finger flexors, without paralytic or spastic complications. 4. Contractions due to unbalanced action of the flexor muscles after accidental solution of continuity of the extensor tendons. 5. Contractions arising from nutritive changes in